
Best Practice Assessment Tool – Addressing Major Barriers

SAFERR MODEL & ASSESSMENT TOOL (Screening and Assessment for Family Engagement, Retention, and Recovery)

Program

Description: SAFERR is a screening and assessment tool

Target Population: Tool developed by SAMSHA – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration for assessing needs of parents with the substance abuse issues working with child welfare, substance abuse treatment and the courts

Goals: Provision of collaborative services to aid in substance abuse recovery

Caseload Data: Agencies who work with families in child welfare system with substance use disorders.

Cost: Publication is free of charge

Evidence: Although research findings and practical experience have established that no single checklist yields the kind of information caseworkers need to make difficult decisions about whether children are safe, they have identified an array of screening instruments and practice principles that, if used appropriately, can provide timely information to guide those decisions. www.ncsacw.samsha.gov

Assessment: Work Readiness and DV screening conducted by staff using the SAFERR documents as part of the initial interview; clients referred to counselors

Description of Services:

- SAFERR is a guidebook designed to help staff of public and private agencies respond to families in the child welfare system that are affected by substance use disorders.
- SAFERR is based on the premise that when parents misuse substances and mistreat their children, the best way to make sound decisions is to draw from the resources of three key systems: child welfare, alcohol and drugs and the courts.
- The SAFERR model helps staff:
 - Create and guide collaborative teams who can improve services to families by sharing information and coordinating services;
 - Support the work of those teams by developing clear expectations regarding mission, authority and accountability;
 - Identify and address state-level policies that may block efficient practice;
 - Select screening and assessment tools and strategies that can be incorporated into daily practice;
 - Support and oversee the implementation of improved practices at the local level; and
 - Monitor and evaluate successes and problems.
- The SAFERR model was developed in response to frequent requests from managers of child welfare agencies for a "tool" that caseworkers could use to screen parents for potential substance use disorders in order to make decisions about children's safety.

- It provides guidance on developing collaborative efforts to improve outcomes for families.
- Once a family has been assessed and approved for services, the client can be put into a work activity right away if appropriate, but there must be a more in-depth Self-Sufficiency Agreement assessment conducted within 90 days of approval (the client is put into an “assessment” component during this 90 day period).
- The client and worker complete a Self-Assessment form as part of this assessment process. Once the assessment is complete, a Self-Sufficiency Plan/Agreement is completed.
- Clients are referred to a “Solutions Recovery Care Coordination (SRCC)” counselor for a Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI)
- The SRCC system provides “screening, assessment, multi-disciplinary care management, and individualized care coordination to TANF customers with substance abuse problems.”
- Work activities within a “treatment and/or substance abuse service setting” include:
 - Recovery Support Volunteer (Community Service) Daily activities within the treatment facility that are defined as Community Service
 - Peer Support Mentor (Work Experience) - Tasks within the treatment facility include assisting peers in treatment activities, i.e., helping a person with barriers in reading proficiency to process and understand written assignments and information; participating in orientating new persons in treatment to schedules and expectations of treatment, and assisting a person in performing community jobs and assignments by providing an orientation to the responsibilities of that job.
 - Peer Support Mentor II (Work Experience) - assigning, reviewing, or supervising the completion of tasks and assignments of peers in performance of responsibilities.
 - Peer Support Coach (Work Experience) – a more active role in assisting others in treatment, such as serving as a group or discussion leader in helping the counselor by providing educational assignments to the group that might reflect life skill improvement, Serve as discussion leaders for educational groups,

Eligibility: Families in the child welfare system with substance abuse disorders

Findings:

- The collective set of workers (child welfare, alcohol and drug, and court system) has increased authority, capacity and skills to respond to the array of problems faced by these families
- States that have used the SAFERR model have found better outcomes for families – ability to respond to a broader range of needs, better use of scarce resources (in this research examiners looked at known users of SAFERR - Maine, New York, Michigan, Kansas, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Virginia, Arkansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Texas, Connecticut, Iowa, Squaxin Island Tribe, Coeur D’Alene Tribe, and Orange County, CA)
- No one system has the skills, training or time to respond comprehensively to whole family’s needs
- Collectively, multiple systems possess much greater knowledge about families and have a wider range of service and response options. Teamwork brings a wealth of perspectives and strengths
- Multidisciplinary casework is better able to assess the needs and strengths of families

Implications for Policymakers and Program Developers to Consider:

- Child welfare needs to pay more attention to a fundamental reciprocity is a challenge for the three systems – child welfare, drug and alcohol, and court systems
- Treatment agencies need to have a better understanding of child maltreatment and the impact of parental substance use on children
- Family Court needs to support treatment and child welfare goals in substance abusing families
- Child Welfare services as well as family court need to share information for informed decision-making
- SAFERR model provides a set of principles, standards and behaviors to guide daily practice.
- Serves as a tool to improve practice and enhance collaboration between the substance abuse treatment system, the child welfare system and the family court system.